

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup>Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, <sup>2</sup>but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

<sup>3</sup>And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." <sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

<sup>5</sup>And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. <sup>6</sup>They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. <sup>7</sup>And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, <sup>8</sup>and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, <sup>10</sup>and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

<sup>11</sup>But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. <sup>13</sup>And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

<sup>14</sup>The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come. <sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

<sup>16</sup>And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup>saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. <sup>18</sup>The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

<sup>19</sup>Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. [ESV]

## Notes

### Revelation 11:1

**<sup>1</sup>Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,**

“**measuring rod**” – This is from the Greek word *kalamos*, which is a reed-like plant that used to grow in the Jordan Valley to a height of fifteen or twenty feet. It had a stalk that was hollow and lightweight, yet rigid enough to be used as a walking staff.

“**staff**” – This is from the Greek word *rhabdos*, which means “a stick, rod, wand, scepter, or staff.” Most likely, John is here referring to a walking staff.

“**And the angel stood**” – This phrase does not appear in some of the best manuscripts and so is questionable. It is more likely that God is the one talking at this point, as in verse three He says, “**And I will give power to my two witnesses.**” This may be viewed by some as evidence that the one speaking is the mighty angel of the previous chapter whom they claim must be Christ, himself. Evidence provided in the study of Chapter 10 seems to indicate otherwise.

“**measure**” – This is a form of the Greek word *metreō*, from which we get our English word “metric.” It means “to measure” or “to dish out in measured amounts.” Since John never gives any physical measurements and since the worshipers are also to be measured, this probably doesn’t refer to measurements of physical dimensions. It is more likely that this “measurement” is a moral evaluation (righteousness) of the temple and those who worship there. There are a number of examples in scripture where measurement is an indication of this kind of moral evaluation, how someone “measures up” to God’s standards:

And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. (**2Kings 21:13**) [ESV]

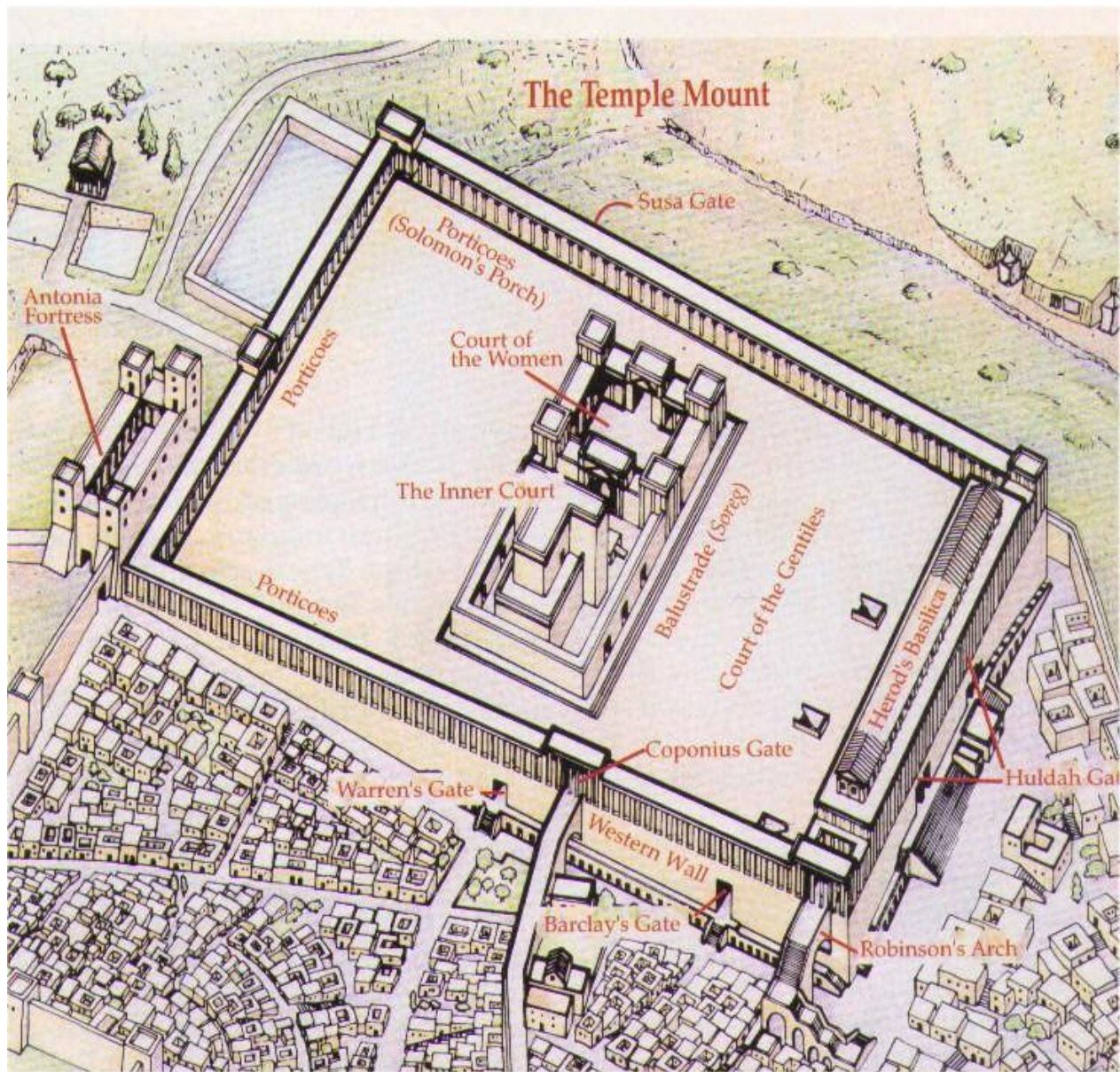
And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter." (**Isaiah 28:17**) [ESV]

The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together. (**Lamentations 2:8**) [ESV]

In the current verse it appears that God is using this measurement to:

1. Evaluate the righteousness of the temple and those who worship there
2. Distinguish between the faithful Jews and the unfaithful Gentiles

“**temple**” – This is from the Greek word *naos*, which is derived from the verb *naiō*, meaning “to dwell.” Hence, *naos* refers to a temple where a deity resides. It is distinguished from the Greek word *hieron* (also translated as “temple”) in that *naos* refers to the temple proper (the court of women, the inner court, the altar of sacrifice, the holy place and the most holy place), but *hieron* refers to the entire temple area, including the court of the Gentiles and the porticoes.



## Revelation 11:2

<sup>2</sup>but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.

“**court outside the temple**” (the word translated “**temple**” is once again the word *naon*). This “**court**” is the area of the temple often referred to as the “court of the Gentiles.” It is the large courtyard area surrounding the temple proper (*naon*). The temple proper is then accessed through a gateway that leads to an inner court called “the court of women.” Gentiles were never allowed in this area, which is what Paul was accused of in **Acts 21:26-29**. Within the inner court there was a raised archway through which only men could pass. Within this inner area was a low wall that separated the men from the area where the sacrifices were performed by the priests. Beyond the area of sacrifices was the inner temple that contained the holy place, where the blood was sprinkled daily, as well as the most holy place

where only the High Priest was allowed to go, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement, to offer a blood sacrifice for all the people.

The instructions given to John seem to indicate that the temple will, in fact, be reconstructed before or during the tribulation in the same manner as the previous temples.

**“they will trample the holy city for forty-two months”** The length of time here given coincides with the time period identified by Daniel as “a time, times, and half a time”:

He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (**Daniel 7:25**) [ESV]

And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. (**Daniel 12:6, 7**) [ESV]

This period of time is referred to by Christ as a time of “**great tribulation.**” Remember that it is only the three and one-half year period (the second half of the seven year period) that is referred to as the great tribulation:

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (**Matthew 24:21**) [ESV]

The beginning of this forty-two month (three and a half year) period is to be preceded by the revealing of “**the man of lawlessness**” as Paul calls him, who will set-up an image of himself in the temple proving to himself that he is god.

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (**2Thessalonians 2:3, 4**) [ESV]

This event, when the antichrist (the prince that shall come, or the beast out of the sea, or the man of lawlessness) sets up his image in the temple, is referred to by Daniel as “**the abomination that makes desolate**”

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate. (**Daniel 11:31**) [ESV]

Christ also referred to this event by the same expression (although it is translated slightly differently):

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), (**Matthew 24:15**) [ESV]

Daniel places this event in the middle of the seventieth week.

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator. (**Daniel 9:27**) [ESV]

Given all the above references, it is clear that John's expression that the Gentiles will, "trample the holy city for forty-two months" refers to the second half of Daniel's seventh week and this time period of three and a half years is what Christ referred to as the period of "great tribulation." During this time, the Gentiles will control Jerusalem and the temple area.

### **Revelation 11:3**

**<sup>3</sup>And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."**

Just exactly who these two witnesses are has been debated for centuries. There are some who claim they are Moses and Elijah because of the similarities of the miracles they are able to perform. Others claim they are Enoch and Elijah because these two were never said to have died. Still others claim that these two are representative of the Church and the Word of God, or as the Church and Israel, or representative of witnesses as a whole during the tribulation.

The one thing we can be sure of is that we are never told exactly who these two are. The fact that the definite article is used in this description (the Greek literally reads, "the two witnesses of mine") is a strong indication that these are two actual people and they are not representative of larger groups of people.

"**they will prophesy for 1,260 days**" – The fact that they will "prophesy" has been called into question by some. Since this is the end of the age just before the return of Christ, what will be the future truth that they are bringing? The word translated "prophesy" is a form of *prophēteuō*, which is a compound word made up of *pro*, meaning "before (either with respect to time or position)" and the verb *phēmi*, meaning "to tell." So, *prophēteuō* can mean "to tell something beforehand" or it can mean "to stand before others and deliver a message." The ministry of prophets both in the Old Testament and New involved both aspects of this ministry. There is no reason to believe that these two witnesses won't also do the same. Perhaps their foretelling will involve the coming of the Messiah and the judgment of sinners, a message that sinners have hated since the Garden of Eden.

The length of time of their prophetic ministry coincides with the length of one-half of Daniel's seventieth week. Biblical scholars have argued throughout the centuries whether this is the first half of the week or the second half, with most of them identifying this period as the second half, also known as "the Great Tribulation." The problem is that there is no reference information given with respect to either the beginning or the end of their ministry that would allow us to identify this period except a great earthquake that occurs at the end. Since there are a number of earthquakes mentioned in Revelation, it is not possible to definitively identify when the ministry of these two prophets begins and ends.

We do have a clue in Revelation chapter 11 in which we are told in verse 14, right after the two witnesses are resurrected, that the third woe is soon to come; and in verse 15, the seventh trumpet is sounded (this is the third woe). So we do know that the period of 3 ½ years of their ministry ends shortly before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Tribulation. Between the end of their ministry and the end of the Tribulation are the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and all 7 of the bowl judgments.

"**clothed in sackcloth**" – This is an indication that their prophetic message is one of doom and woe.

### **Revelation 11:4**

**<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.**

This is the only description given of these two witnesses, which further confuses exactly who they are. They are said to be two olive trees and two lampstands, which may be a reference to Zechariah's prophecy:

And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.

Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth." Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?" He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth." (**Zechariah 4:1-14**) [ESV]

It is also said that these two olive trees and the two lampstands "stand" before God. The word translated "stand" is in the perfect tense indicating that they stood at some time in the past and they are continually in a standing posture at the present time (in John's time.) This may lend some credence to the claim that these two are either Moses and Elijah or Elijah and Enoch as these could very well be standing in the presence of God right now.

## **Revelation 11: 5, 6**

**<sup>5</sup>And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. <sup>6</sup>They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.**

Clearly these two witnesses will be unusual characters. They will prophesy as many of the Old Testament prophets did (see notes on verse three above regarding their message). They will be different than any Old Testament prophet, however, in that they will be able to protect themselves by spewing fire out of their mouths to burn-up their enemies.

Some Biblical scholars claim that it will not rain at all during their three and a half year ministry because of what it says here. A literal translation of the Greek, however, says, "These have power to shut the heaven that it should not rain rainfall in the days of their prophecy." This passage does not say that it "will not rain" in the days of their prophecy; this verse says that they have the power to cause it

not to rain and they have this power in the days of their prophecy. The difference is subtle but significant.

### **Revelation 11:7**

**<sup>7</sup>And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them,**

“**the beast that rises from the bottomless pit**” – This is the first mention of “the beast” in the book of the Revelation. The word translated “beast” is *thērion*, which means “a wild beast or a venomous creature.” In this case it is an indication of the vile nature of this individual who will appear wonderful on the surface but who will be a vile beast on the inside.

The fact that he is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit has led many to say that this is the antichrist who is empowered by Satan, himself. The problem with this argument is that Satan has not yet descended to the pit where he will be incarcerated for 1000 years.

It’s possible that this beast is “**the beast out of the earth**” spoken of in the following:

Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. (**Revelation 13:11, 12**) [ESV]

This beast is the False Prophet, demonically empowered but not satanically empowered, who will come with all the power of the first beast. It would be a fitting showdown between the two true prophets of God and the false prophet. To the delight of the unsaved earth dwellers and to the dismay of the elect, the battle will be won by the false prophet. This may, in fact, be the prelude to the final showdown between good and evil at Armageddon.

### **Revelation 11:8, 9**

**<sup>8</sup>and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. <sup>9</sup>For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,**

These two witnesses will be killed in Jerusalem (**where their Lord was crucified**). They will not be buried but will be left to rot. Incidentally, the Jews were not permitted to allow a dead body to remain unburied, so this may possibly be an intentional affront to Jews. These dead bodies will be seen by people around the world (a situation that was impossible until the 21<sup>st</sup> century).

### **Revelation 11:10**

**<sup>10</sup>and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.**

“**those who dwell on the earth**” is from the Greek *hoi katoikountes epi tēs gēs*, which literally means “those who are living in a certain fixed dwelling on the earth.” It is a stark contrast to the word *paroikeoi*, used of those of us who are saved, which means “those who are sojourners dwelling in a place temporarily.” The expression “**those who dwell on the earth**” refers to all those who are unsaved, who make the earth their permanent home. Incidentally, the unsaved will remain in the earth

(in Hades) until the current earth is destroyed and they appear before the Great White Throne Judgment and are cast into the lake of fire.

These earth dwellers will be so overjoyed over the death of the two prophets that they will celebrate as we do today at Christmas time, sending presents to one another. Incidentally, this is the only mention of rejoicing by those on the earth in the entire book of Revelation.

### **Revelation 11:11, 12**

**<sup>11</sup>But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. <sup>12</sup>Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.**

After three and a half days of lying dead on the street these two witnesses suddenly come back to life and “great fear” comes upon those who see them. The words “great fear” come from the Greek, *phobos megas*. Even those who don’t know Greek can recognize *phobos*, from which we get our English word “phobia” meaning an intense fear, and *megas*, which means “great” or “large.” Hence, these who will see the prophets rise again will experience “great terror” right in the middle of their Christmas-like celebrating.

Immediately upon their coming back to life, these two are summoned up to God’s presence where they ascend to heaven in a cloud. The earth dwellers will see them go. Those who believe in a mid-tribulation rapture of the church see this as symbolic of the rapture and claim that this occurs in the middle of the tribulation at the sounding of the seventh trumpet of judgment (because they believe it to be the “last trumpet blast” spoken of in **1Corinthians 15:52**). Not only is this argument weak and circumstantial, but there is no evidence that indicates this event occurs in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. In fact, it is more likely that this event occurs toward the end of the second half. Another reason why this cannot be an image of the rapture at the “last trumpet blast” is that the seventh trumpet judgment comes after this resurrection. Notice that after this event (after the earthquake) is the proclamation that the second woe is past and the third woe is yet to come. And, after this second woe is completed, only then is the pronouncement and the seventh trumpet blown. This simply does not square with **1Corinthians 15:52** that says the rapture will occur, “**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet,**” which implies that the rapture happens instantaneously and simultaneously in response to the trumpet blast, not as a separate event that occurs before the trumpet blast.

### **Revelation 11:13**

**<sup>13</sup>And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.**

At the same time that the two witnesses ascend into heaven there is a great earthquake. Some have claimed that this is the same earthquake as occurs at the sixth seal judgment, which appears to be at the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the

kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (**Revelation 6:12-17**) [ESV]

But this is not the only great earthquake spoken of in the Tribulation. There is also one at the end of the Tribulation as the seventh bowl is poured out:

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. (**Revelation 16:17,18**) [ESV]

### **Revelation 11:14, 15**

**<sup>14</sup>The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come. <sup>15</sup>Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."**

This proclamation indicates that the events just described occur just before the third woe, the seventh trumpet blast.

“**kingdom of the world**” – The plural use of kingdoms (as some translations have) is not supported in all texts. Many of the texts have a singular “kingdom” here. Some of the texts do not have the word *basileia* (kingdom) at all.

“**has become**” – The tense of this verb in the Greek text is what is called a “proleptic aorist,” which means a future event is so certain that it is spoken of as having already occurred. Even though this proclamation is made before the final seven bowls of wrath are poured out, God’s victory and Christ’s kingdom are so certain that they are spoken of as if they had already happened. This also is an indication that the seven bowl judgments will occur in a short time span.

### **Revelation 11:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup>And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, <sup>17</sup>saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. <sup>18</sup>The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."**

The twenty-four elders are representative of the raptured church. At the proclamation that the end is come (though, in reality, it is not quite here yet), the resurrected church bows down before God and gives Him praise for having finally judged sinful, rebellious mankind and for rewarding the prophets and saints who fear God.

### **Revelation 11:19**

**<sup>19</sup>Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.**

“ark” – This is the Greek word *kibōtos*, meaning “a box.” It is the same word used to describe the ark of God’s covenant and Noah’s ark. There are only two instances in the New Testament in which this word is used to describe the Ark of the Covenant, the other being in **Hebrews 9:4**, which is a description of the Old Testament temple where the ark resided.

In the time of temple worship (both the first and second temple), only the priests could enter the holy place and only the high priest was allowed to venture past the thick curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place. Within this holy of holies resided the “Ark of the Covenant,” which was crafted in the days of the exodus from Egypt under Moses’ guidance. This ark originally resided in the tabernacle and was there also separated from the holy place by a thick curtain. Whenever the children of Israel moved in the wilderness, the ark was covered before it was moved so that no one except the high priest was allowed to see it.

Now, in this scene we find the temple doors opened and the ark of God’s covenant was “seen” within the temple. This represents all the promises that God has ever made to mankind and its revelation is accompanied by loud events in heaven and devastation on the earth.

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